

St. Thomas on Adoration: Some Reflections

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AS HE BEGINS his treatment of adoration in *Summa theologiae* [ST] II-II, q. 84 (a question that has been much-neglected in scholarship on the *Summa*), Thomas points out that the aim of adoration is to reverence the person who is adored. He has already demonstrated during the course of his question devoted to the virtue of religion in general, ST II-II, q. 81, that “it is proper to religion to show reverence to God.”¹ In the fourth article of this earlier question, he explains that we show honor or reverence to someone on account of some excellence that he possesses. A unique honor is due to God, however, on account of his singular excellence, since “He infinitely surpasses all things and exceeds them in every way.”² The preceding article had highlighted the basis of this “singular excellence”: the fact that God is “the first principle of the creation and government of all things.”³ Stated in Trinitarian terms, “the three Divine Persons are the one principle of the creation and government of things.”⁴ Gilles Emery, O.P., writes: “Creation . . . finds its foundation in the trinitarian mystery of *personal communication or communication of being*. God’s activity in the world is rooted in the intra-divine activity of the processions.”⁵

¹ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* (ST) II-II, q. 84, a. 1. All English translations from ST are taken from *Summa Theologica*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province, 5 vols. (New York: Benziger, 1948).

² ST II-II, q. 81, a. 4.

³ ST II-II, q. 81, a. 3.

⁴ ST II-II, q. 81, a. 3, ad 1. On this point, see Gilles Emery, O.P., *Trinity in Aquinas* (Ypsilanti, MI: Sapientia Press, 2003).

⁵ Gilles Emery, O.P., “Trinity and Creation,” in *The Theology of Thomas Aquinas*, ed. by Rik van Nieuwenhove and Joseph Wawrykow (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame, 2005), 61.

The doctrine of creation is thus presupposed in the first article that Thomas devotes to adoration, as also is a metaphysics of participation. The first section of my present article therefore aims to elucidate *ST* II-II, q. 84, a. 1, in the light of Thomas's reflections on creation and on the basis of his metaphysics of participation. Exegesis of this text reveals that Thomas's construal of adoration is fundamentally rooted in Trinitarian faith, and the response to the final objection, which hints at an understanding of human nature as hylomorphically constituted, is important to this construal. *ST* II-II, q. 84, a. 2, asks whether adoration denotes an action of the body. An understanding of Thomas's hylomorphic construal of human nature hinted at in the previous article is necessary if one is to appreciate his reflections concerning the role of the body in adoration. Thomas's anthropological hylomorphism spills over into the final article (*ST* II-II, q. 84, a. 3), which deals with whether adoration requires a definite place. The presence of the doctrine of creation and of a participatory metaphysics continues, however, in an article that ends on an eschatological note. It is to a treatment of creation and participation that the next section therefore turns in the first instance.

Creation, Participation, and Adoration

The idea that "God's activity in the world is rooted in the intra-divine activity of the processions" is implicit in the *sed contra* to the first article of the first question in the treatise on creation in the *Prima Pars*, where Thomas writes: "It is said (Rom. xi. 36): *Of Him, and by Him, and in Him are all things.*"⁶ This point receives extended attention in Thomas's commentary on Romans. In his own summary of his discussion, he states: "All things are *from him*, i.e., God as from the first operating power. All things are *through him*, inasmuch as He makes all things through his wisdom. All things are *in him* as in their preserving goodness."⁷ Thomas goes on to note that power, wisdom and goodness are common to the three Persons and that the phrase "from him and through him and in him" can therefore be applied to each of Them. Nevertheless, power is appropriated to the Father because it involves the notion of principle, since the Father is the principle of the entire Godhead. In a like manner, wisdom is appropriated to the Son, "Who

⁶ *ST* I, q. 44, a. 1, sc.

⁷ Thomas Aquinas, *Super Romanos* 11, lec. 5 (no. 949), in *Commentary on the Letter of Saint Paul to the Romans*, trans. Fabian Larcher, O.P. (Lander, WY: Aquinas Institute for the Study of Sacred Doctrine, 2012).

proceeds as Word, which is nothing else than wisdom begotten,”⁸ and goodness is appropriated to the Holy Spirit, “Who proceeds as love, whose object is goodness.”⁹ Thus, concludes Thomas, “by appropriation we can say: *from him*, namely, from the Father, *through him*, namely, through the Son, *in him*, namely, in the Holy Spirit, are all things.”¹⁰

This *sed contra* has a crucial significance for how we understand the treatise on creation. At the very outset of his reflections, Thomas affords us a clear indication that it is to be read in the light of the doctrine of the Trinity that he has just elaborated in the preceding seventeen questions (*ST* I, qq. 27–43). It is in this light that the notion of participation arises immediately in the response of *ST* I, q. 44, a. 1, where Thomas argues that no being apart from God is its own being, but rather a being by participation.¹¹ Clearly, this participation is in the being of the one God Who is also a Trinity of Persons: God is related to all that exists apart from him as creative cause to effects, and these effects are similar to their cause according to a certain analogy.¹²

Thomas elaborates this point in *ST* I, q. 45, a. 7: “Every effect in some degree represents its cause, but diversely.” He explains that some effects “represent only the causality of the cause, but not its form.” The example he offers of this kind of representation is smoke, which represents fire but not the form of fire. This kind of representation is known as a “trace,” for a trace indicates that someone has been present but does not reveal his identity. Other effects, Thomas tells us, “represent the cause as regards the similitude of its form.” Again Thomas offers the example of fire: fire that is generated represents

⁸ Aquinas, *Super Romanos* 11, lec. 5 (no. 949).

⁹ Aquinas, *Super Romanos* 11, lec. 5 (no. 949). On the appropriation of essential names to the divine Persons, see *ST* I, q. 39, a. 7.

¹⁰ Aquinas, *Super Romanos* 11, lec. 5 (no. 949).

¹¹ “It must be said that every being in any way existing is from God. For whatever is found in anything by participation, must be caused in it by that to which it belongs essentially, as iron becomes ignited by fire. Now it has been shown above . . . when treating of the divine simplicity that God is the essentially self-subsisting Being; and also it was shown . . . that subsisting being must be one; as, if whiteness were self-subsisting, it would be one, since whiteness is multiplied by its recipients. Therefore all beings apart from God are not their own being, but are beings by participation. Therefore it must be that all things which are diversified by the diverse participation of being, so as to be more or less perfect, are caused by one First Being, Who possesses being most perfectly.”

¹² On this point, see Rudi te Velde, *Participation and Substantiality in Thomas Aquinas* (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 95–102.

fire that generates. Another example is a statue of someone: the statue represents that person. This kind of representation is known as the representation of "image." In the case of creation, "image" pertains to rational creatures: since they possess intellect and will, they represent the Trinity by way of image. Just as, in the Trinity, the Son proceeds "as the word of the intellect" and the Holy Spirit proceeds "as the love of the will," so the image represents the Trinity inasmuch as it possesses intellect and will, whereby there is found in it "the word conceived, and the love proceeding."

The important point is: "In all creatures there is found the trace of the Trinity, inasmuch as in every creature are found some things which are necessarily reduced to the divine Persons as to their cause." Thomas goes even further and relates substance, form, and relation to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, respectively. Inasmuch as a creature is a created substance, it represents its cause and principle, and thus, in that way, "it shows the Person of the Father, Who is the *principle from no principle*." With regard to its form and species, it represents the Word, "as the form of the thing made by art is from the conception of the craftsman." Finally, Thomas argues that, according as it possesses relation of order, it represents the Holy Spirit, "inasmuch as He is love, because the order of the effect to something else is from the will of the Creator."

It is precisely the notion of participation that is central to Thomas's reasoning in *ST* II-II, q. 84, a. 1, ad 1, concerning adoration as an act of *latria*. This term is employed to denote the special kind of reverence that is paid to God alone, which differs from the reverence (*dulia*) that we pay to creatures on account of whatever excellences they possess. The latter possess whatever excellence they boast "according to a measure of proportion": their excellence is proportioned to their finite mode of being. These participated excellences are received from God, Whose excellence, in contrast, is proportioned to his infinite uncreated Being. Creatures receive their being and whatever excellences they possess from the infinity of the uncreated God. Catherine Pickstock rightly comments that "a creature more fully participates in Being by growing towards God, without ever departing from its own specific creaturehood."¹³ Adoration of

¹³ Catherine Pickstock, *After Writing: On the Liturgical Consummation of Philosophy* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), 129. She continues here: "Such an ecstatic actuality, whilst it might seem to deny a creature's own essence, in fact holds open a horizon of the ever fuller realization of that essence."

God is bound up with these dynamics of increasing participation in the divine life. The reason for this is that adoration is an external act of religion and the virtue of religion “approaches nearer to God than the other moral virtues, in so far as its actions are directly and immediately ordered to the honor of God.”¹⁴

The authority of Augustine is invoked in support of the observation that, among the external tokens of reverence offered to creatures of excellence, the chief is adoration. Thomas is nevertheless at pains to highlight the radical difference in the nature of the adoration given to creatures (which pertains to *dulia*) and that which belongs to God alone (which pertains to *latria*). Thus, while it was with the reverence due to an excellent creature that Nathan adored David, “it was the reverence due to God with which Mordechai refused to adore Aman fearing *lest he should transfer the honor of his God to a man* (Esther 3:14).”¹⁵ The greatest sin against God is to “give God’s honor to a creature.”¹⁶ The honor afforded to creatures is bound up with the finite degree to which they participate by virtue of their excellences in God’s infinite uncreated Being. It ought not to be confused with the singular honor or reverence that is paid to God, a point made in the *sed contra*, in which the words of Christ himself in Matt 4:10 are cited: “The Lord thy God shalt thou adore and Him only shalt thou serve.”¹⁷

These words, emanating from the lips of Christ, clearly situate Thomas’s treatment of adoration in a specifically Christian context. The Christian context is further established by the objection that adoration is not an act of *latria* on account of the fact that, at the veneration of the Cross on Good Friday,¹⁸ the faithful genuflect at each separate invocation of the three Persons. Hence the three Persons are not adored with the one adoration owed to the unity of the divine substance.¹⁹ In response, Thomas explains that one honor and excellence is indeed due to the three Divine Persons on account of the one excellence that is common to them and that, consequently, one adoration is paid to them. The triple genuflection does not

¹⁴ ST II-II, q. 81, a. 6.

¹⁵ ST II-II, q. 84, a. 1, ad 1.

¹⁶ ST II-II, q. 94, a. 3.

¹⁷ ST II-II, q. 84, a. 1, sc.

¹⁸ A note in the 1981 Christian Classics edition of the Dominican Fathers’ translation of ST informs the reader concerning this point.

¹⁹ ST II-II, q. 84, a. 1, obj. 3.

denote “a difference of adoration,” but rather “represents the Trinity of Persons.”²⁰ Representation constitutes a mode of participation in the reality of what is represented—in this case, participation in the life of the Trinity.

Also central to the Thomas's treatment of the triple genuflection is the psychosomatic nature of human beings, a fact that explains Thomas's insistence in both this question on adoration and the following question, devoted to sacrifice, on external bodily acts as a manifestation of interior acts. Thus, argues Thomas, “exterior adoration is offered on account of interior adoration”²¹ and “the sacrifice that is offered outwardly represents the inward spiritual sacrifice.”²² Clearly, in the case of the triple genuflection, the external acts of the physical body are, in effect, structured by faith in the Trinitarian God. Although Thomas does not put it this way, the one human body makes three genuflections in adoration of the one God Who is Three Persons.

This point in effect presages what immediately follows in the next article (*ST* II-II, q. 84, a. 2), which addresses the question of whether adoration denotes an action of the body. The next section of the present article will consider Thomas's treatment of this question, and as will become evident, human adoration of God (*latria*) is the act of a being who is psychosomatically constituted. Indeed, the psychosomatic unity of the human person means not only that the body expresses attitudes of mind but also that the life of mind is affected by bodily actions. A dynamic interaction obtains between body and soul.

Adoration and the Human Person as a Psychosomatic Unity

As is well known, Thomas inherited his hylomorphic understanding of the human person from Aristotle. Nevertheless, Aristotle is not referred to in this article. Rather, St. John Damascene's *De fide orthodoxa* furnishes Thomas's point of departure in dealing with the implications of human nature for how we adore God. Damascene argues in his *De fide orthodoxa* that adoration is twofold—spiritual and bodily—on account of our twofold nature, which is both intellectual and sensible, and Thomas concludes: “We offer God a twofold adoration; namely, a spiritual adoration, consisting in the internal devotion of the mind;

²⁰ *ST* II-II, q. 84, a. 1, ad 3.

²¹ *ST* II-II, q. 84, a. 2.

²² *ST* II-II, q. 85, a. 2.

and a bodily adoration, which consists in an exterior humbling of the body.”²³ Thomas goes on to contend that the external and corporeal refers to and serves the internal and spiritual as being more important: “Since in all acts of latria that which is without is referred to that which is within as being more foundational, it follows that exterior adoration is offered on account of interior adoration.”²⁴ This contention receives support from the accounts of the relationship between the rational soul and the body that Thomas offers from the very beginning of his career, in his commentary on the *Sentences*, through to his magnum opus, the *Summa theologiae*.

Thomas’s understanding of the human body is inseparable from his teaching concerning the intellectual soul as man’s sole substantial form.²⁵ “The soul is the very nature of the body,”²⁶ he proclaims provocatively in his commentary on the *Sentences*, thereby emphasizing the intrinsic and intimate connection that obtains between soul and body. We can well assert that the body’s actuality derives from the intellectual soul, an assertion that is in accord with Thomas’s metaphysical teaching to the effect that matter “has actual existence by the substantial form, which makes it to exist absolutely.”²⁷ Completely ruled out in this view is the possibility of experiencing

²³ ST II-II, q. 85, a. 2, referencing St. John Damascene, *De fide orthodoxa* 4.12, which reads: “Seeing that we are composed of a visible and an invisible nature, that is to say, of a nature partly of spirit and partly of sense, we render also a twofold worship to the Creator; just as we sing both with our spirit and our bodily lips, and are baptized with both water and Spirit, and are united with the Lord in a twofold manner, being sharers in the mysteries and in the grace of the Spirit” (English translation taken from http://www.documentacatholicaomnia.eu/03d/0675-0749,_Ioannes_Damascenus,_De_Fide_Orthodoxa,_EN.pdf).

²⁴ ST II-II, q. 85, a. 2. I depart from the Dominican Fathers’ translation here in rendering *principalius* as “more foundational,” rather than “of greater import.” The noun *principium* conveys the notion of “principle.” This noun in English has no corresponding adjective, much less a comparative adjective. Yet it is precisely the latter grammatical form that Thomas employs in Latin (*principalius*), thereby implying that *latría* cannot be construed as a purely spiritual phenomenon devoid of any corporeal constitution. As will be demonstrated below, the body itself plays a constitutive role in the act of adoration. The reason for this state of affairs is the psychosomatic constitution of human nature.

²⁵ See Bernardo C. Bazán, “La corporalité selon saint Thomas,” *Revue Philosophique de Louvain* 81 (1983): 369–409.

²⁶ *In I sent.*, dist. 3, q. 2, a. 3, ad 1: “Anima enim est natura ipsius corporis.”

²⁷ ST I, q. 76, a. 6.

one's body from within as though it were a "thing" separate from one's true self. Marie-Joseph Nicolas expresses well Thomas's understanding of the human body when he describes it as "the expressive field of the soul."²⁸ It is the visible and material index of an invisible and immaterial principle. The body is so united to the intellectual soul that it constitutes the soul's somatic manifestation.²⁹ The body is the exterior face of this being whose interior principle is the soul.³⁰

A radical consequence follows from conceiving the intellectual soul as the root principle that issues forth into all the various expressions, both rational and somatic, of our human nature: human rationality and human embodiment can in no way be divorced from one another. Platonic and Cartesian dualisms are rendered impossible. The human body is not external to the intellectual soul; rather, Aristotle's description of man as a "rational animal" must be taken to mean that our animal condition is suffused with rationality and that rationality is informed by our animal condition. A treatment of the emotions would be required in order to appreciate this point better. Nevertheless, as G. J. McAleer expresses the point just made: "The normative structure of the Thomistic body is for spirit and flesh to be interinvolved, for spirit to be suffused by flesh and for flesh to be suffused by spirit."³¹ Matthew Levering is quite striking in his summary statement of this idea: "Human flesh is rational flesh."³²

The point just briefly delineated refers simply, of course, to the idea that the human body is an external manifestation of the demands of the rational soul. The implications of this idea can nevertheless be extended to bodily actions. The body is not something separate from one's true self, and so cannot be regarded as some kind of corporeal

²⁸ See Marie-Joseph Nicolas, "Le corps humain," *Revue Thomiste* 79 (1979): 357–58: "Saisi du dedans, le corps n'apparaîtra donc pas comme une 'chose' mais comme le 'signe d'un sujet' ou comme 'le champ expressif de l'âme' [Grasped from within, the body will therefore not appear as a 'thing,' but rather as the 'sign of a subject' or as 'the expressive field of the soul']" (my translation). The human body can, of course, be validly regarded as an object, as when, for example, a surgeon operates on it.

²⁹ See Nicolas, "Le corps humain," 358.

³⁰ See Nicolas, "Le corps humain," 377: "Le corps est . . . la face 'extérieure' de cet être dont l'âme est le principe 'intérieur' [The body is . . . the 'external' face of this being whose 'interior' principle is the soul]" (my translation).

³¹ G. J. McAleer, *Ecstatic Morality and Sexual Politics: A Catholic and Antitotalitarian Theory of the Body* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), 32.

³² Matthew Levering, "Natural Law and Natural Inclinations: Rhonheimer, Pinckaers, McAleer," *The Thomist* 70 (2006): 200.

instrument at the behest of the rational soul. A bodily action is thus not some kind of effect on the basis of which we can infer some rational intention that ultimately causes it and logically precedes it. An intention does, of course, logically precede an act, but it is the intention of an agent who is psychosomatically constituted. In effect, rationality suffuses the bodily act itself and is to be read *in* it, rather than *from* it. A bodily act is therefore not simply an index of reason's operation, but rather is literally its embodiment. Thus, bodily acts are not guided by reason as by an external agent, but informed by reason in their very constitution. They are intrinsically rational. It is precisely in the light of this construal of man's psychosomatic unity that we are to understand the assertion that "in all acts of latria that which is without is referred to that which is within as being more foundational." The spatial metaphor employed by Thomas could be read in a Platonic or Cartesian manner by anyone not familiar with his radical commitment to the notion that we are body-soul composites. Familiarity with the Thomas's thinking on matters anthropological from the beginning through to the end of his career, however, precludes such an interpretation.

The bodily acts that Thomas mentions as acts of *latria*, acts of exterior adoration offered on account of interior adoration, concern humility. Humility, "a part of temperance, as a virtue annexed thereto,"³³ tempers and restrains the mind so that it does not tend immoderately to lofty things: "It belongs properly to humility, that a man restrain himself from being borne towards that which is above him."³⁴ Knowledge, enters into the constitution of humility, since, in order to restrain oneself from straining toward some excellence or other that lies beyond one's capacities to attain, one must first of all recognize the disproportion between one's capacities and this excellence. This knowledge of one's deficiency therefore "belongs to humility, as a rule guiding the appetite."³⁵ The appetite in question is the rational appetite, the will.³⁶ While knowledge enters into the constitution of humility, this virtue nevertheless resides essentially in the appetite itself, the movement of which it moderates. The appetite in question, however, is intrinsically rational in nature; it is not rooted in our sensible nature. However, it does express itself

³³ ST II-II, q. 143, a. 1.

³⁴ ST II-II, q. 161, a. 2.

³⁵ ST II-II, q. 161, a. 2.

³⁶ See ST II-II, q. 143, a. 1.

in our sensible nature, as has already been pointed out, on account of the psychosomatic unity of the human person. Thomas offers the example of lowered eyes: they literally embody an attitude of fear and respect toward persons, as though one dared not to compare oneself with them. They constitute an instance of what Levering means by "rational flesh," since they embody reason's judgment of one's deficiency. These outward manifestations of humility are secondary; they constitute, as Thomas tells us, "signs of the inward movement of the appetite."³⁷

While relationships between human beings give rise to occasions for the exercise of humility, it would seem primarily to denote our subjection to God. Reason can ascertain by various argumentative routes that God is our first beginning and our final end, such that our being is completely dependent on him. The proofs for the existence of God in *ST* I, q. 2, a. 3, bear out this point. When Thomas proceeds to deal with the divine attributes, he demonstrates that, while the existence of all things apart from God is distinct from their essence, his essence is his existence: it is in God's very nature to exist; he cannot not exist. All other (finite) being apart from God participates in his infinite being.³⁸ The utter dependence of all finite being on God is underscored in Thomas's treatment of creation in the *prima pars* of the *Summa*, as has been emphasized above. He not only translates the notion of the contingency of all being apart from God to the plane of creation, arguing that it is necessary that every being be created by God and tend to him alone as to its final end; Thomas also impresses upon the reader that "to create is to make something from nothing,"³⁹ understanding "nothing" to mean "not-being."⁴⁰ In the face of our absolute dependence on God's creative act for our existence and on his maintaining us in existence at every moment in time, there is no room for presumptuous hope on our part:⁴¹ no one ought to ascribe to himself "more than is competent to him according to the position in which God has placed him."⁴²

The bodily gestures of genuflection and prostration furnish external expressions of the humility that are fitting to human beings in the

³⁷ *ST* II-II, q. 161, a. 2, ad 4.

³⁸ See *ST* I, q. 3, a. 4.

³⁹ *ST* I, q. 54, a. 1, sc.

⁴⁰ *ST* I, q. 54, a. 1.

⁴¹ See *ST* II-II, q. 161, a. 4: "Hope . . . is the movement of a spirit aiming at great things."

⁴² *ST* II-II, q. 161, a. 2, ad 3.

presence of their Creator. This position is in keeping with Thomas's response to an objection that is based on 1 Corinthians 14:15: "I will pray with the spirit, I will pray also with the understanding."⁴³ The objection concludes that "adoration does not denote an act of the body," because "what is done in spirit has nothing to do with an act of the body."⁴⁴ In his response, Thomas writes: "When we genuflect we signify our weakness in comparison with God, and when we prostrate ourselves we profess that we are nothing of ourselves."⁴⁵ These gestures bear within themselves the stamp of reason's judgment of man's nothingness before the divine majesty, a judgment that is formed in the light of what the Christian faith teaches us about creation.

The mention of creation connects us with the reflections above on *ST* II-II, q. 84, a. 1. Creation pertains, of course, to the specifically theological aspect of Thomas's thought. Discourse about creation is primarily the discourse of faith. As Rudi te Velde explains, "creation is not so much a philosophical as a religious notion, inextricably bound up with the biblical religion of the one, unique God who has revealed himself as the almighty Creator of heaven and earth, guiding his creatures towards the good which He himself is."⁴⁶ Of course, it

⁴³ *ST* II-II, q. 84, a. 2, obj. 2.

⁴⁴ *ST* II-II, q. 84, a. 2, obj. 2.

⁴⁵ *ST* II-II, q. 84, a. 2, ad 2.

⁴⁶ Rudi te Velde, *Aquinas on God: The 'Divine Science' of the Summa Theologiae* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2006), 123–24. In a footnote, te Velde explains: "Thomas does think that creation is present, at least implicitly, in the texts of Aristotle and Plato. This is not of course creation in time, but creation understood as causal dependence or, in Platonic terms, participation" (142n4). As te Velde adds, however, Thomas never attributes the language of creation to the pagan philosophers. On this point, John F. Wippel concludes a study of Thomas on creation as follows: "It is clear that Thomas thinks that creation taken strictly as the production of something from no pre-existing subject and as distinguished from creation with a temporal beginning can be demonstrated by natural reason, and that it should be regarded as another preamble of faith. It also seems clear from this study of Thomas's various references to the views of Plato, Aristotle, and Avicenna that in at least some texts Thomas held that some philosophers had arrived at a knowledge of God as the universal cause of *esse* and also at a knowledge of creation" ("Aquinas on Creation and Preambles of Faith," *The Thomist* 78 [2014]: 33). Mark Johnson and Lawrence Dewan also deem Thomas to attribute views of creation to Plato and Aristotle. See Mark Johnson, "Did St. Thomas Attribute a Doctrine of Creation to Aristotle?" *The New Scholasticism* 63 (1989): 129–55; Johnson "Aquinas's Changing Evaluation of Plato on Creation," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 66

is within the context of creation that God communicates his salvific will to all men in the Incarnation of the Word. This communication of himself to human beings by the Incarnation is rooted in the essence of his goodness, since "it belongs to the essence of goodness to communicate itself to others."⁴⁷ The bearing of the Incarnation on the reality of embodied worship is thrown into greater relief in the next article, *ST* II-II, q. 84, a. 3, which deals with spatial aspect of worship. Thomas's treatment of whether adoration requires a definite place continues his emphasis on adoration as proportioned to the psychosomatic reality of human beings.

Embodiment and the Spatial Aspect of Worship

As just intimated, Thomas's reflections on the spatial aspect of adoration in *ST* II-II, q. 84, a. 3, develop from the beginning on the basis of the logic of human embodiment that has been the concern of the last article: "As stated above (a. 2), the chief part of adoration is the internal devotion of the mind, while the secondary part is something external pertaining to bodily signs." Harking back to his discussion of the divine simplicity in *ST* I, q. 3, Thomas points out that spatiality can play no part in the mind's internal apprehension of God: "The mind internally apprehends God as not comprised in a place." In the main body of his response in *ST* I, q. 3, a. 7, which asks whether God is absolutely simple, Thomas summarizes the conclusions of the articles that precede it: "There is neither composition of quantitative parts in God, since He is not a body; nor composition of matter and form; nor does His nature differ from His *suppositum*; nor His essence from His existence; neither is there in Him composition of genus and difference, nor of subject and accident." His argumentation up to this point of *ST* I, q. 3, has thus clearly established that "God is nowise composite, but is altogether simple." Being altogether simple, God utterly transcends the category of spatiality. He does not exist in a place.

Since God does not exist in place, continues Thomas in *ST* II-II, q. 84, a. 3, it follows that he can be apprehended by reason alone.

(1992): 81–88; Lawrence Dewan, O.P., "Thomas Aquinas, Creation, and Two Historians," *Laval théologique et philosophique* 50 (1994): 363–87. Referring to Johnson's article in *New Scholasticism*, Dewan begins: "Recently Mark F. Johnson has shown convincingly that Thomas Aquinas always attributed to Aristotle and eventually to Plato as well, a doctrine of creation" ("Thomas Aquinas, Creation, and Two Historians," 363).

⁴⁷ *ST* III, q. 1, a. 1.

However, he is apprehended by reason precisely “as not comprised in a place.” But bodily signs cannot be extricated from their expression in place and position. On account of the psychosomatic constitution of human nature, a certain rationality can be ascribed to bodily signs. As noted above, for example, lowered eyes embody reason’s judgment of one’s deficiency. Since “bodily signs must of necessity be in some definite place and position,” it follows that place and position in turn enter into the constitution of these signs. Consequently, place and position too are informed by the dynamics of human rationality, with the result that they communicate something pertaining to the adoration of God. Like other bodily signs, a definite place is not essential to adoration, but is required “by reason of a certain fittingness.”

Bodily signs are fitting because they are proportioned to the exigencies of human nature as psychosomatically constituted, on account of which constitution “it is connatural to us to proceed from the sensible to the intelligible.”⁴⁸ Thomas elaborates this point in his response to the third objection in article 3 with reference to the symbolism of place, whereby the sensible points to an intelligible reality. The objection points out that the same God is adored in both the New Testament and Old Testament. In the dispensation of the Old Testament, adoration was toward the west because, according to the Exodus 26:18–25, the door of the tabernacle faced east. Therefore, the objection concludes, “we ought now to adore towards the west, if any definite place be requisite for adoration.”⁴⁹

The first reason offered by Thomas in his response to the foregoing objection is cosmic in its scope: “The Divine majesty is indicated in the movement of the heavens which is from the east.”⁵⁰ Neither Scripture nor any source from the Tradition is explicitly invoked here, but underlying Thomas’s reason is the doctrine of creation and his participatory view of reality, his understanding of the created universe as participating according to its finite mode in God’s uncreated being. Also operative is his theory of analogy. As an effect of God’s creative causality, the universe reflects in an analogous way something of the

⁴⁸ ST II-II, q. 84, a. 2.

⁴⁹ For a number of other objections against Mass being celebrated *ad orientem*, see Br. Evagrius Hayden, O.S.B., “Convertere, Israël, ad Dominum Deum Tuum,” <http://media.newliturgicalmovement.org/pkwas/Evagrius,%20Convertere%20Israel.pdf>. Hayden follows these objections with three *sed contra* arguments. After then offering his own response, he finally addresses the individual objections.

⁵⁰ ST II-II, q. 84, a. 3, ad 3.

divine being, just as any effect tells us something about its cause.⁵¹ In the example under consideration, the movement of the heavens from the east is caught up in an analogical and participatory relationship with God. This movement of the heavens is, as indicated above, a “trace”: just as smoke represents fire, so too the movement of the heavens represent the causality of the divine cause, but not the divine nature itself.⁵² Although Umberto Eco is correct in discerning less appeal to a symbolical attitude in Thomas than in preceding thinkers on account of Thomas’s appreciation of “the ontological and formal reality of things,”⁵³ metaphysical symbolism nonetheless remains a reality in his thought.⁵⁴ His fusion of a Platonic metaphysics of participation with an Aristotelian metaphysics of substance prevents any metaphysical symbolism from being a mere flight of fancy. A participatory understanding of reality is nevertheless necessary for apprehending its true meaning: while one can enquire into the structure of substantial being in isolation from its dependence on God as its ongoing creative cause, questions concerning its meaning can be answered only in reference to God as its creative cause and final end.

Continuing with his explanation, Thomas says that revelation serves to throw further light on the fittingness of facing toward the east in adoration.⁵⁵ According to the Septuagint version of Genesis

⁵¹ See *ST I*, q. 93, a. 6.

⁵² See *ST I*, q. 45, a. 7. See also *ST I*, q. 93, a. 6: “A *trace* . . . represents something by way of an effect, which represents the cause in such a way as not to attain to the likeness of species. For imprints which are left by the movements of animals are called *traces*: so also ashes are a trace of fire, and desolation of the land a trace of a hostile army.”

⁵³ Umberto Eco, *The Aesthetics of Thomas Aquinas*, trans. Hugh Bredin (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988), 141.

⁵⁴ Eco’s judgment seems extreme and dogmatic: “In Aquinas—that is, in the person who gave most complete expression to the philosophical and theological thinking of the age—all of this [symbolical outlook] has vanished” (*The Aesthetics of Thomas Aquinas*, 140). Thomas’s treatment of the rite of the Mass in *ST III*, q. 83, is replete with symbolic understandings. For a commentary on this question, see David Berger, *Thomas Aquinas and the Liturgy* (Ann Arbor, MI: Sapientia Press, 2004), 27–41.

⁵⁵ See Hayden, “Convertere, Israël, ad Dominum Deum Tuum”: “From the inspired testimony of Sacred Scripture we also have several passages that indicate the preeminence of worshiping towards the east. These are of two kinds, either they indicate that Christ departs into and returns from the east, or else that certain geographical locations are to be found in the east that are known for the eminent nobility of their symbolism.” Hayden illustrates the use that the Fathers in general made of these passages.

2:8, paradise was located in the east. In asserting that facing toward the east thus signifies our desire to return there, Thomas introduces an anthropological element that augments the first reason's focus on non-rational creation: the heavens. He also appeals to teleology when he talks about "our desire to return to paradise." Thus, both protology and eschatology are operative in this second reason: to talk of our desire to return to paradise is a metaphorical way of expressing our desire to return to God as our creative cause. One element of Neoplatonist metaphysics accepted by Thomas helps us to understand this point. Fran O'Rourke points out: "Aquinas accepts from Neoplatonism the principle that every effect is converted to the cause from which it proceeds; the reason is that each thing desires its good, and the good of an effect derives from its cause. It seeks its cause, therefore, as its own good."⁵⁶ As proceeding from God, we bear within ourselves a directing tendency by virtue of which we aim at conversion to and assimilation with our Origin, the God of Judeo-Christian revelation.

Reference to the revelation of Christ brings Thomas's argument to its climax. In *ST* II-II, q. 84, a. 3, ad 3, Thomas discerns "a certain fittingness in adoring towards the east" on account of Christ, Who is "the light of the world."⁵⁷ Here, Thomas interprets the reference in Zechariah 6:12 to "the Orient" Christologically in the light of this reference to Christ as "the light of the world," as also he also does with Psalm 67:34, where he understands Christ to be the one "Who mounteth above the heaven of heavens to the east" (a common Patristic interpretation) and, therefore, expected to return from the east, as Matthew 24:27 confirms: "As lightning cometh out of the east, and appeareth even into the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be." The words of Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger / Pope Benedict XVI coincide with and express well the idea that Thomas highlights here: "The fact that we find Christ in the symbol of the rising sun [or, as in the last example, lightning] is the indication of a Christology defined eschatologically. Praying toward the east means going to meet the coming Christ."⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Fran O'Rourke, *Pseudo-Dionysius and the Metaphysics of Aquinas* (Leiden: Brill, 1992), 235.

⁵⁷ This quotation is from John 8:12 and 9:5.

⁵⁸ Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, trans. John Saward (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2000), 69.

Conclusion

In *ST* II-II, q. 160, a. 2, Thomas remarks that humility moderates “the movement of the mind towards some excellence.”⁵⁹ Prostration before God offers a symbolic expression of humility: when we prostrate ourselves before God, “we profess that we are nothing of ourselves.”⁶⁰ Such corporeal signs as prostration have, in turn, an impact on our affections, and thereby move us to submit to God, since “it is connatural to us to proceed from the sensible to the intelligible.”⁶¹ As Diana Fritz Cates explains, “as long as a human being is alive—as long as his or her intellectual soul functions as the form of his or her body—all of his or her intellectual operations will engage the brain-body complex in one way or another, directly or indirectly.”⁶²

According to Thomas, humility pertains to choice, which in turn involves both the will and the reason: it is materially an act of the will but formally an act of the reason.⁶³ In a sense, the act of reason precedes that of the will and orders it: reason presents its object to the will, and the will tends it. Thomas relates the acts of the will and reason to each other as matter and form, respectively. Choice is therefore substantially an act of the will, for it is “accomplished in a certain movement of the soul towards the good which is chosen,” and on this account, Thomas concludes that choice “is evidently an act of the appetitive power.”⁶⁴ With regard to humility, this act of the appetitive power restrains an individual from pursuing that which is above him. This material aspect, however, presupposes knowledge of the disproportion that obtains between him and whatever lies beyond his ability to attain. In other words, “knowledge of one’s deficiency belongs to humility, as a rule guiding the appetite.”⁶⁵ Nevertheless, humility pertains to the appetite itself in that it moderates its movement. In all of this, however, we can never leave behind the dynamic influence of the corporeal aspect of our nature, as Thomas suggests

⁵⁹ *ST* II-II, q. 160, a. 2.

⁶⁰ *ST* II-II, q. 84, a. 2, ad 2.

⁶¹ *ST* II-II, q. 84, a. 2.

⁶² Diana Fritz Cates, *Aquinas on the Emotions: A Religious-Ethical Enquiry* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2009), 88. It would of course be more correct to refer to the “body-soul” unity that is the human person, rather than to the “brain-body complex,” since the brain is, after all, simply a physical organ.

⁶³ See *ST* I-II, q. 13, a. 1.

⁶⁴ *ST* I-II, q. 13, a. 1.

⁶⁵ *ST* II-II, q. 161, a. 2.

when he maintains that “we exhibit signs of humility in our bodies in order to incite our affections [*affectus*] to submit to God.”⁶⁶ Cates gives negative expression to this idea when she writes: “It is . . . a mistake to think of the intellectual acts of humans, such as . . . choosing, and experiencing affections, as if they were acts of a spirit that inhabits a body but does not really use it—or uses it in a way that is not determined (to some extent) by the body itself, such that one could engage in intellectual acts in much the same way if one were to slip free of the body.”⁶⁷

Adoration, an external act of the virtue of religion that consists in “an exterior humbling of the body,”⁶⁸ is a particular instance of the dynamic expressed by Cates. In brief, the character of the internal devotion of the mind that constitutes spiritual adoration is determined to some extent by the signs of humility effected in our bodies. The triple genuflection that represents the Trinity of Persons is a case in point:⁶⁹ they arguably cultivate devotion to the one God Who is three Persons. While Thomas does not develop this point, one could reasonably argue that place and position also have some bearing on the character of the internal devotion of the mind that is proper to adoration. To face toward the east is a symbolic gesture that can enkindle and communicate a humble recognition of devotion to the Creator God Who has ordained the movement of the heavens from the east and to Christ Our Savior, Who “is expected to come from the east.”⁷⁰ Thomas would arguably concur with Benedict XVI’s exhortation that “we should definitely take up again the apostolic tradition of facing east, both in the building of churches and in the celebration of the liturgy.”⁷¹

Going beyond Thomas’s own assertions, but in keeping with them, one could argue that ecclesiastical architecture, music, art, and liturgical practice have a role to play in cultivating the internal devo-

⁶⁶ ST II-II, q. 84, a. 2. Robert Miner argues convincingly that, for Thomas, *affectus* pertains to the rational appetite, in contrast to *passio*, which belongs to acts of the sensitive appetite (*Thomas Aquinas on the Passions: A Study of Summa Theologiae 1a2ae 22–48* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009], 35–38).

⁶⁷ Cates, *Aquinas on the Emotions*, 88.

⁶⁸ ST II-II, q. 84, a. 2.

⁶⁹ See ST II-II, q. 84, a. 1, ad 3.

⁷⁰ ST II-II, q. 84, a. 3, ad 3.

⁷¹ Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 70. On this point, see Uwe Michael Lang, *Turning Towards the Lord* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2009).

tion of mind that pertains to adoration.⁷² They do, after all, engage sense, and are thus capable of inciting adoration of God by fueling internal devotion of the mind.⁷³ Various elements of Enlightenment rationalism that have, to some extent or other, informed liturgical reform since the Second Vatican Council have, however, served to quench the spirit of adoration in the faithful. Among these elements is a non-participatory construal of reality that undermines the ability to appreciate symbolic significance, particularly insofar as a particular symbol communicates an experience of the divine. Reality comes to be seen rather in linear-historical terms.⁷⁴ Anthropological dualism has also undermined the capacity of man to appreciate the significance of symbols, for it cultivates a disembodied spirituality, whereas symbols are physically instantiated realities. Moreover, anthropological dualism lies at the basis of the idea that this-worldly reality furnishes raw material that human beings may freely manipulate as much as they possibly can. The implications of this dualism are, I contend, what Ratzinger characterizes as “a widespread dissolution of the rite, which must now be replaced by the ‘creativity’ of the community.”⁷⁵ The seriousness of this development becomes apparent in an argument that Stratford Caldecott attributes to the anthropologist Mary Douglas: “Contempt for ritual forms leads to the privatisation of religious experience and thereby to secular humanism.”⁷⁶ In other words, a non-participatory and dualistic approach to liturgical

⁷² For a development of this point, see Aidan Nichols, O.P., *Looking at the Liturgy: A Critical View of Its Contemporary Form* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1996), 87–114.

⁷³ For the development of a Thomistic aesthetic theory that is attentive to the implications of his hylomorphic anthropology, see Kevin E. O'Reilly, *Aesthetic Perception: A Thomistic Perspective* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2007).

⁷⁴ Making this point with reference to Scotus and how one understands the nature of history, Matthew Levering writes: “While participation remains in Scotus, it does so in a deracinated form. . . . Lacking a rich account of participation and analogy, reality is ‘desymbolized’: human time is no longer understood as caught up in a participatory relationship with God, and history becomes a strictly linear, horizontal, intratemporal series of moments” (*Participatory Biblical Exegesis: A Theology of Biblical Interpretation* [Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2008], 19).

⁷⁵ Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 163.

⁷⁶ Stratford Caldecott, “Liturgy and Trinity: Towards an Anthropology of Liturgy,” in *Looking Again at the Question of the Liturgy with Cardinal Ratzinger: Proceedings of the 2001 Fontgombault Liturgical Conference*, ed. Alcuin Reid, O.S.B. (Hampshire, UK: Saint Michael's Abbey Press 2003), 39.

worship not only undermines adoration of God but also conduces to the exclusion of God from the rest of human life.

A full substantiation of these claims with regard to contemporary Catholic liturgical worship is not possible within the confines of this present article. I have introduced them in order to suggest that the neglect of Thomas's reflections on adoration in *ST* II-II, q. 84, informed as they are by the doctrine of creation, by a participatory metaphysics, and by a hylomorphic anthropology, ought to be remedied not only for its own sake but also because this question provides rich resources that can help liturgical theologians and practitioners, as well as architects, musicians, and artists, to understand, to reappraise, and to impart a new direction to the current state of affairs. **N&V**